

Between the stately Brooks Academy Museum and the handsome spired First Congregational Church, this village contains the most classically elegant architecture anywhere on the Cape. Indeed the entire center of the village is on the National Historic Register.



A striking Greek revival building in the heart of Harwich Center, the Brooks Academy Museum, with its bright white facade and massive fluted doric columns, dates from 1844 and was built as a private school. It survived as a public school until 1963 when the new school opened nearby and the last group of students trod its historic halls.

Today the Brooks Academy building houses the Harwich Historical Society and within its walls can be found the history of Harwich in exhibits, books, programs and archives. Its friendly volunteers, many of whose families date back generations, are only too happy to share with visitors.

On permanent display is a comprehensive exhibit about the cranberry: its origins, cultivation and central role in the history of the town. Temporary exhibits include a scale model working railroad depicting the old rail line between Hyannis and Orleans which takes

up nearly an entire room. Train buffs of all ages have been flocking to see it and give it rave reviews. Another display offers a new slant on the Civil War as seen through the eyes of Sidney Brooks who went to war as a member of the U.S. Christian Commission to minister to the spiritual needs of the men at the front. His letters home are riveting.

The First Congregational Church in its present form dates from 1854 and with its adjoining cemetery, forms a stunning centerpiece of the village. The nearby Brooks Library offers a wealth of town history or "Harwichiana" in its Cahoon History Room, a fine Cape Verdean Collection, and a local authors and painters section. Town offices are housed across the street in another handsome building, erected as a bank in 1914. An example of "colonial revivalism," it is on the Register of the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Behind the Congregational Church the Cape Cod bike trail intersects the village, while nearby Brooks Park features a bandstand, ball field, tennis courts and ample parking. In the Summer the park holds weekly open air concerts and outdoor fairs. A Mexican restaurant and some small cafes dot the village, making it unnecessary to leave the village if you're hungry.

Scenic [Cranberry Valley Golf Course](#), named one of Golf Digest's 50 Best Public Courses and rated "Excellent" by Zagat Golf Guide in 2007, is located in Harwich Center off Oak Street. A par 72, it's a full service course with pro shop, practice facility and a cafe serving breakfast and lunch.

If you like good baseball and would like to see prospective major league players up close, be sure to check out the [Harwich Mariners](#) of the famous [Cape Cod League](#). They play their home games at Harwich High School's Whitehouse Field and are the 2008 League Champions.

For more information contact the Brooks Academy Museum (508) 432-8089 or the Brooks Library (508) 430-7562.

For charming inns and lodging contact the Harwich Chamber of Commerce (508) 432-1600.

V.E. Laporte

Harwich Historical Society